



**10**

Sunshine Care Center Rapid Access Clinic

# QLatinx: : Pioneering Harm Reduction for Central Florida’s Drug Community

By Andres Acosta Ardila

In the vibrant heart of Central Florida, where the pulse of diversity beats strong, QLatinx stands as a beacon of resilience and compassion. Born from the ashes of tragedy, QLatinx emerged as a grassroots force dedicated to racial, social, and gender justice, particularly within Orlando’s LGBTQ+ Latinx community. Founded in the wake of the horrific events of June 12th, when Pulse nightclub became the site of a mass shooting, QLatinx has since become a bastion of empowerment, community

building, and harm reduction.

Central to QLatinx’s ethos is the unwavering commitment to centering and uplifting the most marginalized voices within the community. In the aftermath of the Pulse tragedy, QLatinx brought together individuals directly impacted by the violence to forge a path toward healing, equity, and inclusion. Through the creation of supportive infrastructures and the promotion of affirming spaces, QLatinx endeavors to cultivate a community free

## In this issue...

**1-2**

QLatinx

**3**

Beyond the White Coat

**4-5**

Black History Block Party



Embracing Data-Driven Quality Management

**8**

National Black HIV AIDS Day  
International Women’s Day

**9**

LIVING with HIV

**11**

Newly Diagnosed?

# CENTRAL FLORIDA HIV PLANNING COUNCIL

## STANDING COMMITTEES

### The merged Membership and PR & Marketing Committee

- This meeting is the first Tuesday of the month at 2:00 PM

### The merged Service Systems & Quality and Needs Assessment & Planning Committee

- This meeting is on the first Thursday of the month at 10:00 AM.

### Executive Committee

- This meeting is the Thursday of the week before the Planning Council meeting at 2:00 PM

## PLANNING COUNCIL SUPPORT CONTACT INFORMATION

### Whitney Marshall PCS Manager

407-429-2216

Whitney.Marshall@hfuw.org

### David Bent PCS Coordinator

407-429-2119

David.Bent@hfuw.org

### Nyla Tapley PCS Engagement Specialist

407-429-2190

Nyla.Tapley@hfuw.org

## RYAN WHITE PART A SERVICE PROVIDERS

**AIDS Healthcare Foundation**  
407-204-7000  
www.aidshealth.org

**ASPIRE Health Partners**  
407-245-0014  
www.aspirehealthpartners.com

**Center for Multicultural Wellness and Prevention**  
407-648-9440 • www.cmwp.org

**Dept. of Health in Lake County**  
352-771-5500  
http://lake.floridahealth.gov/

**Dept. of Health in Orange County**  
407-858-1437  
http://orange.floridahealth.gov/

**Dept. of Health in Osceola County**  
407-343-2030  
http://osceola.floridahealth.gov/

**Dept. of Health in Seminole County**  
407-665-3200  
http://seminole.floridahealth.gov/

**Heart of Florida United Way**  
407-835-0900 • www.hfuw.org

**Hope and Help Center**  
407-645-2577  
www.hopeandhelp.org


**Miracle of Love**  
407-843-1760  
www.miracleofloveinc.org

**Orange County Medical Clinic Pharmacy**  
407-836-7160

**Midway Specialty Care Center**  
407-745-1171 • midwaycare.org

**Part A Recipient's Office**  
2002-A E. Michigan Street  
Orlando, FL 32805  
407-836-7631



 Connect with us on Facebook @  
CentralFloridaHIVPlanningCouncil

 **Orangecountyfl.hiv**  
http://centralfloridahivpc.com

from the shadows of fear, violence, and hate.

Now, QLatinx has set its sights on addressing another pressing issue facing the community: substance use. Recognizing the intersectionality of drug use with trauma, marginalization, and societal pressures, QLatinx has embraced harm reduction as a guiding principle in its approach. By prioritizing the health, safety, and dignity of individuals who use drugs, QLatinx seeks to mitigate the harms associated with substance use while respecting the autonomy and agency of each person.

One of QLatinx's innovative harm reduction initiatives involves the distribution of fentanyl test strips at raves and large events like Electric Daisy Carnival (EDC). Fentanyl, a potent synthetic opioid, has been implicated in a growing number of overdose deaths across the country. By providing test strips that allow individuals to check their drugs for the presence of fentanyl, QLatinx aims to prevent overdoses and save lives.

In addition to harm reduction supplies, QLatinx is also committed to providing training and education to organizations across Central Florida. From the Central Florida HIV Planning Council to Harmony Healthcare, QLatinx offers free training sessions on topics ranging from overdose response to safer drug use practices. By equipping service providers with the knowledge and tools they need, QLatinx hopes to create a more supportive and informed network of resources for the community.

Furthermore, QLatinx has been at the forefront of research and advocacy in the field of harm reduction. Through partnerships with academic institutions and community organizations, QLatinx has conducted studies on harm reduction practices among individuals who engage in chemsex, a phenomenon where drugs are used in the context of sexual activity. Findings from these studies have been presented at prestigious conferences such as the United States Conference on HIV/AIDS (USCHA) and the Biomedical Prevention Summit, highlighting the importance of harm reduction in addressing complex health issues.

Crucially, QLatinx recognizes the life-saving potential of naloxone, a medication used to reverse opioid overdoses. Through community outreach and distribution efforts, QLatinx ensures that naloxone is readily available to those who may need it most. By empowering community members with the tools to respond to overdoses, QLatinx hopes to prevent unnecessary deaths and foster a culture of care and solidarity.

In the face of adversity, QLatinx remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing harm reduction and building a more inclusive and equitable society. Through collaboration, education, and advocacy, QLatinx continues to be a driving force for positive change in Central Florida, leaving an indelible mark on the journey toward healing and liberation.

**Planning Council Support  
Heart of Florida United Way  
1940 Cannery Way  
Orlando, FL 32804  
407-835-0906**

**CFHPC@hfuw.org**

**“Drop Us  
a Line...”**

# Beyond the White Coat: The Human Connection in Healthcare

Co-Authors: Rene Cotto-Lewis, Vickie L. Cobb-Lucien, APRN, FNP-BC, AAHIVS

**In the healthcare profession, the appearance of a medical provider often garners attention.** While some may argue that a provider's look is of paramount importance, I believe that it's only significant to an extent. Ultimately, what truly matters is not the outward appearance, but the personal experiences providers bring from their own lives and how these experiences shape the care they deliver.

As healthcare providers, our primary responsibility is to ensure that our patients feel comfortable and included in the healing process. This involves transcending the traditional image of the provider in the white coat and connecting with patients on a human level. When patients see us not just as medical experts but as individuals who have faced similar challenges and barriers, it enhances the therapeutic relationship.

For instance, as a young adult, I faced several personal and financial obstacles on my journey to becoming a medical provider. Sharing these struggles with patients does more than just show vulnerability; it demonstrates understanding and solidarity.

**IT TELLS THEM, "I'VE BEEN THERE, I GET IT." THIS LEVEL OF EMPATHY CAN SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCE HOW PATIENTS ENGAGE WITH THEIR TREATMENT PLANS.**

Moreover, medical mistrust among people of color is a significant barrier, one that can be mitigated when providers are relatable and come from similar ethnic backgrounds. By keeping our interactions "real and relatable", we not only improve treatment adherence but also achieve critical health outcomes like viral load suppression and retention in HIV care; outcomes that are particularly vital in communities most at risk.

Furthermore, adopting a communication style that avoids medical jargon for straightforward, understandable language helps patients lean in and actively participate in their care. This approach fosters a partnership rather than a hierarchical relationship where the provider is seen as an authority figure imposing decisions. By focusing on teamwork and shared understanding, we not only improve treatment adherence but also achieve better health outcomes overall.

In conclusion, while the traditional image of the medical provider clad in a white coat symbolizes knowledge and authority, it is crucial that we do not let it become a barrier. By embracing our humanity and balancing it with our medical expertise, we create a more effective, empathetic, and holistic approach to healthcare that truly transforms lives. At Embrace Health, this is our philosophy: we embrace the health you deserve.





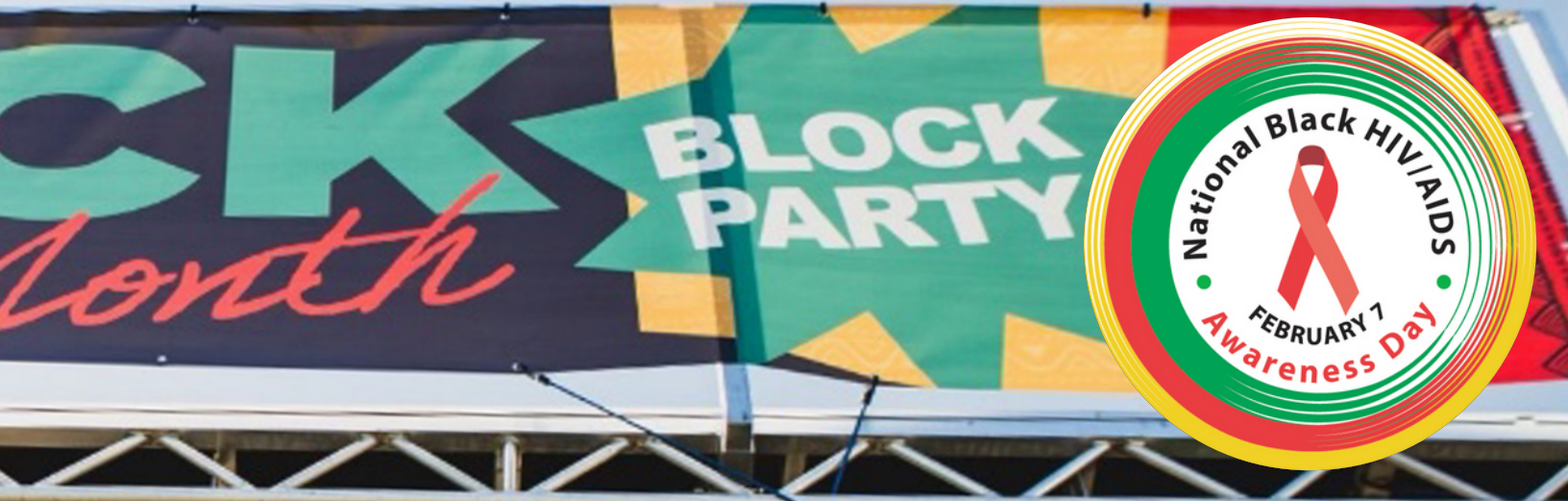
# Black History

By Kara Williams, MPA, MNM

On Saturday February 24, 2024 the Area 7 Program Office (Talk Test Treat Central Florida) in partnership with 104.5 the Beat, and the City of Orlando hosted the Black History Month Block Party, in observance of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. National Black HIV Awareness Day is a day to highlight the progress of HIV testing, prevention, and treatment efforts and consider our ongoing challenges to preventing HIV transmission among Black or African American people (hereafter referred to as Black people) in the United States. This year's theme, Engage, Educate, Empower: Uniting to End HIV/AIDS in Black Communities, emphasizes the role we each play in ending HIV among Black communities. Orange county continued to see disparities in HIV diagnoses where black males are 5 times higher compared to their white counterparts in being diagnosed with HIV and black women are 12 times higher compared to their white counterparts.

Through this wellness event we provided access to needed services through 25 vendors including Kroger who provided food access to over 150 individuals. In addition we had the opportunity to collaborate with five HIV testing providers Crew Health, Sunshine Specialty, Positive Assistance, Pineapple Healthcare and Hope and Help and we were able to test 120 individuals and referred 4 individuals into HIV treatment.





# Black Party



# Embracing Data-Driven Quality Management in HIV Service Delivery



**In the field of HIV service delivery, consistently providing high-quality care is both a primary objective and an ongoing challenge.** The implementation of Data-Driven Quality Management (DDQM) plays a crucial role in this sector, reinforcing the commitment to excellence in care. This approach underscores the significance of using data not merely as a tracking tool, but as a vital component in shaping a robust, patient-centered, and adaptable care framework. Through DDQM, HIV services are empowered to base their decisions and improvements on concrete evidence, ensuring that their strategies are effectively aligned with the needs and outcomes of the patients. This focus on data-driven strategies is essential for maintaining the high standards of care necessary in this dynamic and critical area of healthcare.

## The Pillars of Quality Management in HIV Care

DDQM in HIV services is built on four key pillars: Quality Planning, Quality Assurance, Quality Control, and Quality Improvement. Each of these pillars plays a vital role in ensuring that services not only meet the current standards but also evolve to address the changing needs of clients.

### Quality Planning: Setting the Course

Quality planning is where the journey towards enhanced HIV care begins. This phase involves setting clear, achievable standards for patient care and support services. The integration of data into this planning phase is crucial. It provides a factual basis for setting goals and standards, ensuring that they are aligned with the actual needs and outcomes of the service delivery. Data in this context can come from a variety of sources, including patient outcomes, service usage patterns, and feedback from clients and staff.

### Quality Assurance: Maintaining Standards

Once standards are set, quality assurance ensures that these are consistently met. This phase involves regular monitoring of service delivery processes. By integrating data into this phase, organizations can more accurately assess whether the services are being delivered as intended and identify areas where adjustments may be needed. Data analysis in this phase helps in maintaining a high standard of care and ensures that the services are running smoothly and efficiently.

### Quality Control: Identifying and Addressing Issues

Quality control focuses on identifying specific issues in the delivery of services and addressing them effectively. In this phase, data analysis is used to pinpoint areas where the services may not be meeting the set standards and to understand the reasons behind these shortcomings. This targeted approach allows for more precise interventions, ensuring that the quality of service is not compromised.

### Quality Improvement: Continuous Evolution

The final pillar, quality improvement, is an ongoing process. It involves using the insights gained from data to make services more effective and efficient. This phase is about looking at long-term trends and feedback to identify opportunities for proactive improvement in service delivery. By continuously revisiting and revising the quality standards based on new data, organizations

can ensure that their services remain relevant and effective.

## Implementing DDQM in HIV Services

The implementation of DDQM in HIV service delivery requires a structured approach:

- 1. Data Collection:** Identify and gather relevant data that reflects various aspects of service delivery.
- 1. Data Analysis:** Analyze the collected data to extract meaningful insights. This involves looking for patterns and trends that can guide improvements in service delivery.
- 1. Informed Decision Making:** Use the insights gained from data analysis to inform decisions about service delivery. This could involve adjusting processes, changing service protocols, or introducing new initiatives.
- 1. Continuous Monitoring and Adaptation:** Regularly monitor the impact of changes and adapt strategies based on ongoing data analysis. This ensures that the services remain responsive to the needs of clients and the dynamics of HIV care.

## Conclusion

Data-Driven Quality Management in HIV service delivery represents a fundamental shift in perspective, where every team member plays a pivotal role as a quality manager. This approach is not confined to a series of procedural steps; it is an iterative, dynamic process that embeds data at the core of continuous service enhancement. Embracing DDQM means cultivating a culture where every decision, every change, and every strategy is informed and shaped by data. This mindset ensures that services are not just effective at a single point in time but are in a state of perpetual adaptation, responsive to the evolving needs of clients. Data Driven Quality Management positions every individual in the team, from front-line staff to senior management, as active contributors to the cycle of improvement. In doing so, DDQM becomes more than a strategy; it transforms into a guiding principle for organizations committed to delivering the highest standard of HIV care – care that is not only impactful and client-centered but also reflective of an ongoing dedication to excellence and adaptability. This collective commitment to data-driven quality management ensures that every aspect of HIV service delivery is continually scrutinized, evaluated, and enhanced, keeping pace with the changing needs of clients and the advancements in HIV care. In this way, DDQM is not just a tool for management; it's a shared ethos that empowers each team member to contribute meaningfully to the delivery of superior, responsive, and compassionate HIV care.



**Author's Note:** Dr. Lauren Josephs is an established Health Disparities Researcher and Social/Behavioral Scientist. Her career spans significant roles in research, evaluation, public health, and over two decades as a licensed psychotherapist. As a consultant, Dr. Josephs has supported corporations, governmental entities, and nonprofits in improving outcomes for the populations they serve. Dr. Josephs currently supports the Center for Multicultural Wellness and Prevention, an organization with which she has a long-standing relationship, as a Quality Management Consultant.



# National Black HIV AIDS Day

By Ida Starks

On February 4, 2024, New Covenant Baptist Church of Orlando along with Let's Beehive, Miracle of Love, Inc., and The Bros in Convo Initiative joined together for an amazing event to educate and test the faith-based community. As we approached National Black HIV/AIDS Day on February 7, the Pastor Rev. Dr. Leroy Rose and Lady Nordia Rose welcomed Public Health and its partners to come into the church and test its parishioner and the surrounding community. Rev. Rose and First Lady Nordia were the first who agreed and were tested during Sunday mornings service. 33 HIV screenings were administered, information and resources were distributed, information and resources were distributed, and education was given regarding other STI's and PrEP. This event was organized by Ida Henson-Starks with the Florida Department of Health in Orange County.



# International Women's Day

By Kara Johnson Williams

On Friday March 8, 2024 the Talk Test Treat Latinos HIV Taskforce coordinated in the "Dia Internacional de la Mujer—International Women's Day." International Women's Day is a day to raise awareness of the importance of empowering women in all environments, protecting their rights and ensuring that they can reach their full potential. Through the collaboration with the following agencies: Pineapple Healthcare, Bliss Cares, Aspire Health Partners and the HIV Stigma Taskforce, we were able to also celebrate National HIV Women and Girls HIV Awareness Day. The goal of this event was to educate women on the impact HIV and the disparities among Latin women. Our event survey indicated 50% of respondents never taken an HIV test and 72% never heard of PrEP or PEP. Through this event we educated to 75 Latin women on HIV testing recommendations, PrEP/PrEP Access, HIV Treatment and we addressed HIV stigma. We were able to provide HIV testing to 14 and directly linked 3 women to PrEP services.





# LIVING with HIV as a young adult under 30.

Interview by Anthony McNeil

**Beginning this process, it is important to note that I will be open as long as I can remain anonymous for my own personal reasons. I feel that even though I want to create that boundary I still have a story to tell.**

**Q: How long have you been HIV-positive?**

A: I have been positive since birth.

**Q: When were you made aware HIV education in general?**

A: I was made aware of HIV in general at an early age, I remember being in elementary school so about 8 years old. My mother worked in the field so she would explain HIV to me as something that was affecting the blood and immune system. A family friend was very sick and always in the hospital so, being curious, I would always ask why they were sick. They would have a cold but to wrap my head around being in the hospital with a cold was puzzling. Not knowing what they were battling at that time.

**Q: So, when did you actually find out you were positive?**

A: From the ages 8-16 I would attend this summer camp. There would be different types of children that would attend, some in wheelchairs and some with cancer for example. Growing up I was always told I had severe kidney issues. Going in and out of the hospital became my normal way of living. When I was 16 years old, I found out my status a week before going to summer camp. My mother sat me down and explained at the age of 18 years old she had had an abortion. They did not sterilize the needles and that resulted in her contracting HIV. However, she was not made aware of having the virus until 14 years later when she came to the US to have my younger sister. She arrived for her prenatal appointment. They completed a panel of testing, and they told her she had HIV. The doctor then prescribed her medication so that my little sister did not contract it. At this time, I was 4 years old, and I did not come to the states until I was 5. That is when my mother had me tested.

**Q: How did that make you feel when she told you at age 16?**

A: I was angry, no, furious and not just at her but everything as a whole! My mom explained that she did not know, and she was able to prevent my sister from getting infected. At times I can admit I was jealous because I did not want to deal with that plus I hate needles, not to mention, taking all that medicine sucked. I had to miss out on school and the realization that not everyone went to all the doctors appointments and even the "special" camp that I went to just felt as if I was not a normal kid.

**Q: Do you think that being aware of your status forced you to grow up faster than other children your age?**

Yes. Early in high school you start to learn about STIs, and sexual health and I would notice that HIV was not something that was discussed as frequently as the other STIs. Sometimes I feel that they were even misinformed considering I already had a lot of education on this subject.

**Q: You were young when you were diagnosed. Has your status affected your romantic relationships?**

Yes, in a positive and a negative sense. Positively when educating partners some were willing to receive the information with questions and concerns and no judgement. Negatively there were partners that were heavily stigmatizing and judgmental. Safe to say I have had a healthy balance, but I am currently in the season of focusing on myself and more importantly my own mental health.

**Q: What do you think is the biggest misconception about living with HIV and AIDS?**

It's not as bad as it used to be. Even though there are medication and it's not the death sentence it once was, people are still being infected in large numbers especially amongst black women. Another pretty big misconception is that PrEP is only for gay men. That's a big one especially since you don't hear many women talking about taking PrEP. Another is that we don't need to test pregnant woman. I hear that you must request these tests, so I just urge you to be in tune with your body and get your blood work done every three months. If you're married get your blood work done routinely. Unfortunately, a lot of women pop up with HIV from their partners being unfaithful so know your status.

**Q: What's your advice to women and girls who have been recently diagnosed with HIV?**

It's not the end of the world, don't accept anyone's negative treatment of you whether it be a friendship or romantic relationship. Take your medication and live your life.

**Q: Do you plan on educating and disclosing your HIV status to your children?**

A: Yes, so they are aware of the different diseases that are out there. Also, I want to teach them how important it is to be kind to everyone, especially since you don't know what anyone's story is. I think that if I empower them with knowledge at a young age, they can make great informed decisions as they get older.



# SUNSHINE CARE CENTER RAPID ACCESS CLINIC



**MY  
ART  
WORKS**

**Antiretroviral Therapy (ART)**  
helps people with HIV stay healthy and become undetectable so they can focus on their lives and not their HIV diagnosis  
Find the right care provider for you at [www.talktest-fl.com](http://www.talktest-fl.com)

Ending  
the  
HIV  
Epidemic

As a part of the Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. (EHE) plan one of our goals is to ensure we provide rapid access to HIV care. At the Sunshine Care Center located within the Florida Department of Health in Orange County. We wanted to ensure all our community is aware of our Rapid Access Clinic. The Rapid Access Clinic is a team effort between the Sunshine Care Center and the Area 7 Program Linkage to Care Team, and we strive to ensure that no later than 7 days after receiving a diagnosis of HIV, clients are linked into care (seen by a medical provider and provided medication). For more information please see our points of contact:

## LINKAGE TO CARE TEAM

Jesse Dixon 407-723-4195 • Orvin Vargas 407-723-5063 • Lula Butler 407-888-1270 • Wakeeta Bond 407-723-5120  
Brenda Reed 407-723-5152 • Branise Lubin 407-723-5060 • Esther Ferrer 407-723-4165

**SUNSHINE CARE CENTER SERVICES**  
832 W Central Blvd 3rd Floor Orlando Florida 32805

# Newly Diagnosed & Don't Know What To Talk To Your Healthcare Provider About?

Michael Anthony Alonso, Area 7 Patient Care Planning Group Representative

## When you're newly diagnosed with HIV, it's important to get as much information as possible to make decisions about your health.

Remember, your provider works for you, and you have a right to have these questions answered. Here are some questions you might consider asking your HIV medical provider about treatment options and long-term health outcomes:

### Understanding Your Diagnosis:

- Can you explain what my diagnosis means in terms of my current health and what I can expect in the future?
- What is my current CD4 count, and what does it mean for my immune system?
- What is my viral load, and how does it impact my health and treatment options?
- What is a genotype and why is this test done and how is it used?

### Treatment Options:

- What are the treatment options available for my stage of HIV?
- Can you explain how antiretroviral therapy (ART) works and its importance in managing HIV?
- Are there any new or experimental treatments I should consider?
- How do we decide which treatment is best for me?

### Managing Treatment:

- What is the recommended treatment plan, and what are the steps I need to follow?
- What are the potential side effects of the prescribed treatment, and how can they be managed?
- How often will I need to take medication, and what happens if I miss a dose?
- How will my treatment plan be monitored and adjusted over time?
- What is HIV resistance and does my medication have a high barrier to resistance?

### Impact on Lifestyle and Long-term Health:

- How will HIV and its treatment affect my daily life, work, and relationships?
- What lifestyle changes should I consider to support my treatment and overall health?
- Can you provide information on diet, exercise, or other lifestyle modifications that can improve my long-term health outcomes?

### Preventing Transmission:

- How can I prevent transmitting HIV to others?
- What is undetectable equals untransmittable (U=U), and how does it relate to my treatment?

### Support Services:

- Are there any local or online support groups that you recommend for people who are newly diagnosed with HIV?
- Can you provide information on counseling services or mental health support?

### Future Planning:

- How does being HIV-positive affect my ability to have children?
- What should I know about planning for the future with HIV in terms of health insurance, employment, and legal rights?
- Checkups and Monitoring:
  - How often will I need to see you or have blood tests?
  - What are the key indicators we will monitor to assess the effectiveness of my treatment?

Bringing a list of questions like these to your medical provider can help you better understand your diagnosis, treatment options, and how to manage your health moving forward. Remember, there are no wrong questions to ask; getting clear information is a key step in taking control of your health after an HIV diagnosis.

### Do You Have HIV & Want To Improve Communication With Your Provider?

For those who have been living with HIV, communication with healthcare providers is important for managing your condition effectively long term. Here are some questions you might consider asking your HIV medical provider to stay informed about your treatment options and long-term health outcomes.

### Treatment Efficacy and Adjustments:

- How effective is my current treatment regimen in managing my HIV, and are there any signs that I should consider changing it?
- Have there been any new advancements in HIV treatment that might be more effective or have fewer side effects than my current regimen?
- What is HIV resistance and does my current regimen have a high barrier to resistance?
- Monitoring and Health Maintenance:

- Based on my latest lab results, how is my overall health, and are there any concerns or areas we need to look-into more closely?
- How often should I do health screenings, and are there specific tests I should prioritize given my HIV status and overall health?
- Mental Health and Well-being:
  - How can I address mental health challenges related to living with HIV, and can you recommend resources or professionals who specialize in this area?
- Are there any support groups or community resources you recommend for people living with HIV?
- Preventing Transmission:
  - Can we discuss the latest recommendations for preventing the transmission of HIV to partners, considering my current health and treatment regimen?
  - How does the concept of undetectable equals untransmittable (U=U) apply to my situation, and what does it mean for my relationships?
  - Is Undetectable the same as "Less than 200 copies?"

### Long-term Planning:

- How might my HIV treatment needs change as I get older, and what should I consider in terms of long-term health planning?
- Are there considerations for managing other age-related health conditions in conjunction with HIV?

### Insurance and Healthcare Access:

- Are there any changes in healthcare policy or insurance coverage that could affect my access to HIV care and medications?
- Can you provide guidance on navigating insurance or healthcare systems to ensure I continue to receive the best possible care?

Asking these questions during your appointments can help ensure that your treatment plan remains optimal for your current health status and life circumstances. It's also a good way to stay informed about new developments in HIV care and to address any concerns you may have about living with HIV over the long term. Remember, your provider works for you, and you have the right to ask these questions.



[www.ocfl.net/ryanwhite](http://www.ocfl.net/ryanwhite)



Can't wait for the next Red Ribbon Times? Us either! Stay connected for all the latest info on Facebook @ CentralFloridaHIVPlanningCouncil